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NEWS RELEASE

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WASHINGTON, June 23: <sup>145</sup>Two important acquisitions of American painting were announced today by David E. Finley, Director of the National Gallery of Art. One is a portrait of Joseph Dugan, by Thomas Sully, a bequest from the late Herbert L. Pratt, of New York. The other is an Inness landscape showing the Lackawanna Valley at Scranton, which was acquired for the Gallery by Mrs. Huttleston Rogers.

Both of these paintings have been placed on exhibition in the Gallery's collection of works by American painters. "These two major achievements of American art", Mr. Finley stated, "are milestones in our continuing effort to make the collection of American painting at the National Gallery outstanding in this country."

John Walker, Chief Curator of the National Gallery of Art, pointed out that the two paintings were executed early in the artists' careers, when both painters were doing their most distinguished work. Joseph Dugan, the Philadelphia shipping merchant and philanthropist, was painted by Sully in 1810. His portrait, in its engaging informality of pose and liveliness of expression, recalls the best work of the same period by Raeburn, and proves that Sully at the age of 27 was already capable of competing with the leading English painters.

Commenting on the landscape by Inness, Mr. Walker said, "Inness was only 30 years old when he painted The Lackawanna Valley, but he had already made three trips to Europe. In 1854, when he returned from his third journey, he was under the spell of Corot, especially in the handling of light. The Lackawanna Valley, which he painted in 1855, shows this clearly.

"The beautifully drawn tree forms of the foreground and in the middle distance, the roundhouse, church, and workers' quarters retain the characteristics of Inness in the early 'fifties: They are tense, specific, and local. But in addition to these qualities, the landscape is bathed in a pearly morning light under a cloudless sky, and is majestically sweeping in design, giving, as in Corot's early work in Italy, a marvelous romantic freshness.

"The history of the painting," Mr. Walker said, "is extremely interesting. The picture was commissioned by George D. Phelps, the first president of the Delaware and Lackawanna Railroad, who desired a painting of the railroad's first roundhouse, which was at Scranton. The picture was to be used to advertise the railroad, and is an early example of the present tendency in industry to give to art the patronage which has not been forthcoming, to the same extent as formerly, from other sources.

"Inness went out to Scranton by stagecoach to make the preliminary sketch. On the journey he lost his baggage and had to write his wife for funds. He finished the picture, only to have the railroad committee say it was unsatisfactory. They made him show all four trains the railroad owned, though Inness compromised by showing, of the fourth, only the smoke of its locomotive coming out of the roundhouse.

"Inness was furious to have to paint the D. L. & W. initials on the tender of the first locomotive, but his wife persuaded him to do it because the family needed the money, which was seventy-five dollars.

"For the better part of thirty years," Mr. Walker continued, "Inness lost track of the painting. Then, when he was in Mexico City in the Eighteen-eighties, he discovered The Lackawanna Valley, in a junk shop. Its days of advertising over, it had been purchased by the shopkeeper with a job-lot of office furnishings. Inness bought it back, and it was one of his most prized possessions.

"In an interview just before his death he praised the painting highly, and it seems particularly fitting that a landscape which the artist loved and valued so much should, after its many vicissitudes, be the first work to represent him in the National Gallery."